

2.1.2 Growth

Analysis of the potential growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project is based on demographic information from the SCAG 2016-2040 RTP growth forecasts for the cities of Irvine, Costa Mesa, and Santa Ana, and Orange County.

2.1.2.1 Regulatory Setting

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, which established the steps necessary to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, require evaluation of the potential environmental effects of all proposed federal activities and programs. This includes a requirement to examine indirect consequences, which may occur in areas beyond the immediate influence of a proposed action and at some time in the future. The CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1508.8) refer to these consequences as indirect impacts. Indirect impacts may include changes in land use, economic vitality, and population density, which are all elements of growth.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) also requires the analysis of a project's potential to induce growth. The CEQA guidelines (Section 15126.2[d]) require that environmental documents "...discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment..."

2.1.2.2 Affected Environment

Under CEQA, growth inducement is not necessarily considered detrimental, beneficial, or environmentally significant. Construction of a new or improved highway project could indirectly induce growth by reducing or removing barriers to growth by creating conditions that attract additional residents or new economic activity. In general, a highway project may impact the overall growth in the area studied, the location of growth within the area, and the rate of growth. A highway project may also remove an obstacle to growth by providing new access, more direct access, or improved LOS on an existing facility. Significant growth impacts could be manifested through the provision of infrastructure or service capacity to accommodate growth beyond the levels currently permitted by local or regional plans and policies. In general, growth induced by a project is considered a significant impact if it directly or indirectly affects the ability of agencies to provide needed public services, or if it can be demonstrated that the potential growth significantly affects the environment in some other way.

Different transportation projects will influence growth to different degrees and in different ways. Caltrans, in conjunction with FHWA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), developed a guidance document titled *Guidance for Preparers of Growth-Related, Indirect Impact Analyses* (May 2006). The guidance adopts a two-phase approach to the evaluation of growth-related impacts. The first phase, called “first-cut screening,” is designed to help the environmental planner determine the likely growth potential effect and whether further analysis of the issue is required. The first-cut screening involves examining a variety of interrelated factors to address the following questions:

1. How, if at all, does the project potentially change accessibility?
2. How, if at all, do the project type, project location, and growth-pressure potentially influence growth?
3. Is project-related growth “reasonably foreseeable”? If there is project-related growth, how, if at all, will that affect resources of concern?

There are many factors that may affect the amount, location, and rate of growth in the region of a project. Such factors include:

- Market demand for housing, employment, and commercial services
- Strength of the local employment and commercial economy
- Availability of other roadway improvements
- Availability of other services and infrastructure (e.g., schools, water)
- Land use and growth management policies of the local jurisdictions
- Desirability of the climate and living or working environment

The project study area, as well as most of southern California, has experienced dramatic growth in the last 30 years, and this trend is expected to continue. During the past several decades, the SCAG region, including Orange, Imperial, Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Ventura counties, has been one of the fastest-growing regions in the nation. Between 1950 and 1970, the population doubled in size, growing at a rate of 5 percent per year. Between 1980 and 1990, the region’s population grew by more than 25 percent, to 14.6 million. Between 1990 and 2000, the region’s population grew by nearly 15 percent, to 16.5 million. Additional population and employment growth within the study area is expected to take place through the natural increase and redevelopment of existing land uses or infill development of vacant parcels. Land uses within the study area are already established, with limited opportunity for new unplanned large-scale development.

SCAG population, household, and employment estimates and the annual average growth rates between 2015 and 2040 growth forecasts for cities within the study area, Orange County, and the SCAG region is provided in Table 2.1.2-1. Growth forecasts for the study area cities of Irvine, Costa Mesa, and Santa Ana are also provided for years 2012 through 2040, as reported in the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS.

Table 2.1.2-1. Growth Trends

| Jurisdiction | Population | | Household | | Employment | |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| | 2012 | 2040 | 2012 | 2040 | 2012 | 2040 |
| SCAG Region (% change) | 18,322,300 | 22,123,100 | 5,885,500 | 7,406,500 | 7,440,500 | 9,871,500 |
| | (20.74%) | | (25.84%) | | (32.67%) | |
| Orange County (% change) | 3,071,600 | 3,461,500 | 999,500 | 1,152,300 | 1,526,500 | 1,898,900 |
| | (12.69%) | | (15.29%) | | (24.40%) | |
| Irvine (% Change) | 227,100 | 327,300 | 81,800 | 123,400 | 224,400 | 320,000 |
| | (44.12%) | | (50.86%) | | (42.60%) | |
| Costa Mesa (% Change) | 111,200 | 116,400 | 40,000 | 42,500 | 84,400 | 93,200 |
| | (4.68%) | | (6.25%) | | (10.43%) | |
| Santa Ana (% Change) | 329,200 | 343,100 | 73,300 | 78,000 | 154,800 | 166,000 |
| | (4.22%) | | (6.41%) | | (7.24%) | |

Source: SCAG, 2016.

According to these forecasts, the growth rate in the SCAG region as a whole are forecast to experience a faster rate of growth than Orange County; however, growth in Irvine, within which most of the project improvements are located, is expected to experience a population growth of more than 44 percent, greater than 10 times more than any of the other study area cities.

As described in Section 2.1.1, Land Use, the project is identified in the SCAG 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and 2017 FTIP as a planned and programmed project. The project is consistent with facilitating planned growth. While the project may result in a change in travel patterns for some drivers in the area, the project itself is not anticipated to cause development to occur in the study area.

2.1.2.3 Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1 (No Build)

Under Alternative 1 (No Build), no modifications to the existing freeway facility would occur. The existing condition of the I-405 corridor within the study area is not consistent with the regional mobility goals of Caltrans, OCTA, or the affected cities and would not provide the transportation infrastructure or meet the goals and objectives of the SCAG RTP/SCS. These regional planning documents anticipated the growth planned within the local jurisdictions within Orange County, specifically the study area, and respond to projected growth. Alternative 1 (No Build) would not influence the level of growth within the study area cities because jurisdictions are primarily build out, and there are limited areas available for development or redevelopment; therefore, Alternative 1 is not anticipated to influence the amount, location, and/or distribution of growth or housing and jobs in the local cities and unincorporated areas within the study area. Existing congestion would remain within the study area and is projected to continue in the future under this alternative.

Build Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative) and Build Alternative 3

Based on the criteria for performing a “first-cut screening” as described above, the likely growth potential for the project is analyzed below:

- How, if at all, does the project potentially change accessibility?

Implementation of the build alternatives has the potential to improve travel speeds and travel times, which could change congestion levels and level of service. The proposed project has the potential to improve accessibility to, from, and within the study area. Accessibility associated with land use development is not anticipated to change as a result of the proposed project. The freeway and roadway improvements would not change existing land uses nor increase intensities in currently developed areas. Thus, the proposed project would not increase growth pressure nor influence further growth that could affect accessibility. The build alternatives are not anticipated to influence the amount, location, and/or distribution of growth or housing and/or jobs in the local cities and unincorporated areas within the study area.

- How, if at all, do the project type, project location, and growth-pressure potentially influence growth?

Though adding capacity to an existing freeway facility may be considered as contributing to growth-related impacts, these would be limited to indirect effects from improved

accessibility. I-405 is a major route for the transportation of people, goods, and services throughout the region. The project would improve I-405 to more effectively serve existing and future travel demand in the project area through improvements to the operational performance of I-405. The project would not modify local or regional access to and/or from I-405. The project is designed to improve existing and projected congestion rather than create a new route to an area not currently served by major transportation routes.

The project is consistent with the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and the goals and policies of the applicable planning documents of the various jurisdictions that comprise the project study area. The project is intended to address existing and projected traffic congestion within the project study area, and it is not expected to result in any changes to land use. No developable land areas would be made more accessible by the project, and the project would not open new areas to development or lead to changes in land use and density. Almost all widening activities would occur within the existing ROW.

Growth pressure from development in the surrounding areas could affect existing and future travel demand on the I-405. Because the project is anticipated to accommodate existing and future travel demand in the corridor related to existing and planned growth approved by local jurisdictions and not contribute to unplanned growth in the area, the project is not considered growth inducing. Thus, no direct or indirect long-term impacts on growth are anticipated with implementation of the build alternatives.

- Is project-related growth “reasonably foreseeable”? If there is project-related growth, how, if at all, will that affect resources of concern?

The study area is within an urban/suburban fringe environment where there is continued growth. Though transportation projects may contribute to growth-related impacts, the build alternatives would occur within the existing freeway ROW. Any potential impacts to resources of concerns in the study area would be minimized with protective measures during project construction. The proposed project is not anticipated to induce further urban growth within the study area; therefore, it would not result in growth-related impacts on resources of concern.

This “first-cut screening” analysis demonstrates that the build alternatives would not change access but would instead facilitate improved mobility through reduced congestion and trip reliability, resulting in improved commute times for I-405 users. Land use would not be affected because the build alternatives are not growth inducing and would not result in

reasonable foreseeable growth. Based on the analysis above, the build alternatives do not require further analysis of growth-related impacts.

Construction (Short-Term) Impacts

The build alternatives would not have any temporary direct or indirect impacts on growth-inducing factors because temporary construction does not induce growth.

2.1.2.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The project is not growth-inducing, and no further analysis of growth-related impacts is required. The potential for unplanned development is limited given the built-out nature of the study area and entitlement status of existing vacant land; therefore, no avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are required.